

# The Two Captains

By W. CLARK RUSSELL.

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## CHAPTER VII.—Continued.

Crystal's face cleared a little and he smoked thoughtfully and in silence. Pope eyed him askant, somewhat darkly, but on meeting his gaze his face lighted up with one of his fine cordial, Irish smiles. It was clear from this and further discourse they held that they had as yet formed no plans after they had obtained as much plunder as would satisfy them.

The crew made merry in the dog-watches that evening, wearied as they well might be after the labors of the night. Just before sundown the boatswain Grindal lurched through the yellow sheen to the quarter-deck.

"Captain Pope," said he, "the men ha'n't seen their flag yet. In there any objection to its being hoisted, that all hands may make sure of the colors they sail under?"

"Certainly," says Pope with great heartiness. "Pipe all hands aft and let them salute the flag with a glass of grog apiece."

Grindal chirruped somewhat tipsily, and the crew came tumbling on to the main deck. A bucket of gin was drawn and the hands were ordered not to drink till the flag floated over them.

Pope went to the flag-locker just abaft the wheel and took out a little oval of stuff that was like a pall rolled up. He bent this weird flag to the main-royal signal halyards. Then took a turn round his hand and shouted to his man to bring him and Crystal a glass of grog. He then addressed a few words to the pirates, and, tweaking the line he held, the flag at the masthead broke and blew out large, glossy, and black at the raven's wing again the fading scarlet over-head.

The whole ship's company roared out three cheers, and then drank, the captain and his mate drinking with them.

The flag was a black ground. It lacked the melodramatic ghastly de-

moving her people, then sinking of her, afterwards transferring her crew to the first thing we can pick up bound west or south."

"I'm of Grindal's mind," said Pope. "Right, if you sink the vessel," interjected crystal.

So the order was given for the guns to be loaded, and the small arms served out. They loaded the carronades, and ran them out. The two long guns were also loaded; the boats were seen to, all was made clear for action.

"Hoist the ensign," said Pope. "Haul up your courses, and back the fore-top-sail. Down hallelum."

The little vessel was hove-to right athwart the course of the approaching craft, which might now be some two or three miles off. The sails of the stranger were remarkably white.

"A gent's pleasure boat," said Grindal. "A proper craft for our flag, I guess."

"I've been thinking that," says Crystal, looking at Pope, who made no answer.

The stranger came rippling along toward the brig with pathetic unsuspiciousness. And she was now within half a mile, perhaps within reach of a trumpet, when all of a sudden, as though the Gypsy's true character had been discovered, her length of broadside with its high sheer of bow, like a smack's of these days, drew out, and she was off!

"Fill on your fore-top-sail, Mr. Crystal," roared Pope. "Grindal, jump forward and send a shot from the Long Tom after her, as the brig brings her to bear. Fire wide."

The boatswain rushed forward. This sort of orders made his blood run fast. They swung the fore-top-sail yard, and the brig, close hauled, stood in chase.

Pope, examining the schooner carefully, now clearly made her out to be a pleasure vessel. She was steered by a tiller, and abreast of that long arm of brass-ended timber, stood a

Pope's men, breathing short, looking restless and wild, bloodshot, hairy and rugged, every man with a cutlass in his hand, stood about the companion-way waiting, while the following conversation took place between Pope and the tall, lofty and commanding old gentleman.

"I am Earl Fitzgibbon," said the tall old gentleman, "and am proceeding from the Azores to England. I beg that you suffer me to depart. You will discover nothing in this vessel worth your attention. Examine the cabin by all means. You will find everything plain, and such money as I have in the ship you are welcome to, about ninety guineas."

"Thanks, my lord. It is our custom to make ourselves welcome without invitation," says Pope. "We cannot let you depart for ninety or nine hundred guineas. We must transfer you and your crew to that brig."

"But why, sir? But why?" cried his lordship, suddenly exhibiting signs of agitation. "What would you do with me? What would you do with my vessel and the men? Name the price of a ransom, sir!" He stretched forth his hand, which trembled exceedingly. "Any sum in reason you shall have, if you will suffer me to proceed."

Pope cocked his ear at the word ransom; it gave him an idea wholly new to him. He reflected, staring into the eager gaze of his lord kept fastened upon him. Then his face lengthened, he glanced at his men who stood near, and said to the nobleman:

"We're not brigands, we can't talk of ransoms. You and your crew must go aboard my ship, my lord. Gypsy ahoy!" roared Captain Pope, giving no heed to his lordship, who, with alarmed, yet commanding gestures of his arm, was endeavoring to make himself heard.

"Hullo!" answered Captain Crystal. "Send a boat for the crew of this schooner!" sang out Pope. "Get the longboat over. Come aboard, Mr. Crystal."

The square man flourished his hand.

"In God's name, sir," exclaimed his lordship, "suffer us to proceed on our way. Name a sum that will satisfy you and you shall have my draft."

Pope smiled. "On my word as a British nobleman," continued the fine old man, all tremor and dignity, "that draft shall be Bank of England money to you, and not a question asked."

"I would trust you but not your crew," said Pope. "My lady," cried he, turning upon the men, "this schooner would be a fine thing. Perhaps in a few days—"

"On my honor, sir," vehemently interrupted Lord Fitzgibbon.

Pope shook his head. The nobleman flushed, started and stared a little wildly at him. But now the crew of dastards were coming up out of the fore-castle; they were eleven men and one was a clean valet with a white cloth, and another was a cook in a white cap. As they came to the gangway guarded by the pirates with their naked cutlasses, the boat steered by Crystal dashed along side, and that captain came aboard, others of the crew following him, and in a few minutes later the longboat arrived. There was still plenty of daylight left in the air, and in it the crew of the schooner including the cook and the valet, made a mean and melancholy procession as they came to the gangway. They entered the boat, all with very white faces and terrified looks.

"Now, my lord," says Pope, with an imperious wave of his sword toward the gangway.

"Is it possible," cried the Earl, not offering to move, "that I cannot prevail upon you to accept my draft for a considerable sum of money in lieu of my persons and this vessel? Of what use will this schooner be to you? She is without cargo. There is less than a hundred pounds in money on board."

Crystal, who stood hard by while some of the first gang of pirates hung about the companion-way, says without reverence to Pope, "What does the old chap offer?"

"Two thousand pounds," cried the Earl.

Pope flourished his sword toward the gangway.

Crystal sent a swift look over the little ship, and said, "Who's going to take up the money? Besides as a vessel she's worth more than two thousand pounds, not to mention the value of the old gentleman's liberty."

"Do you suppose," cried Pope in a rage, uttering one or two oaths, "that for all my lord here could sign his name to, I should be for letting him sail away in a swift keel to report our delings? What do you think I value my neck at?"

"Isn't his draft worth considering?" says Crystal. "Two thousand! By thunder, though I value my neck as highly as yours, I'm willing to take my chances of presenting that man's draft when we return home."

"No," answered Pope, in a low but hot tone of determination, and without another word he went into the cabin, followed by half a score of his men.

(To be continued.)



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"What does the old chap offer?"

vices of skull and raw bones. It was not a flag, however, that a man would continue flying. After it had floated aloft five minutes, it was hauled down, rolled up and stowed away. The men went forward, and one produced a fiddle, and many of the sailors turned to and danced in the beautiful fading light.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### The Earl.

The night passed quietly; and the day came along draped in sober gray, with a long lead-colored swell freckled by some sea-fowl within gun-shot of the quarter. In the afternoon of this day, the sky being gray and dry and the sea-line clear, a sail sprang up right ahead. The two captains were at dinner when the boatswain put his ugly face into the skylight and reported her. Both came up leisurely, knowing the wind to be a little more than a small draught. Pope with his radiant spyglass under his arm. He leveled it at the sail; Crystal peered at her through the brig's telescope.

"Shall we attack her or pass her with a civil salute?" said Pope. "Speak, Crystal."

The square man considered. When he spoke his speech was slow, his delivery solemn, and he looked fierce with his scar.

"I'm for passing on," said he. "For more, I'm for putting the brig's helm over and giving yonder vessel a wide berth."

"What d's say, Grindal?" said Pope, sounding upon his boatswain.

"This is a clear sea," answered the boatswain, "and a fast-class opportunity. I'm for boarding her, taking all she's got that's worth having, re-

tall and martial figure, an elderly gentleman, in a long military cloak, and a soft black hat with a wide brim. Her few men stood with their heads above the line of her bulwarks, straining their vision in evident alarm and amazement at their pursuer.

The boatswain had leveled the long piece fair at the stranger, when Pope saw that she had put her helm down and was slowly rounding, with a faint tremor of canvas, as though fear shook her, into the wind's eye. Instantly the captain began to roar out orders. A boat was lowered, twelve men armed with cutlasses and pistols tumbled into her. Pope took charge with a sword at his side and a pistol in his bosom; and Crystal with folded arms and a stern black face, stood at the quarter-deck calling looking on.

The boat swept alongside. Pope and eleven men sprang aboard with flourishing cutlasses, but so far from meeting with any resistance they found a clear deck. One figure alone remained. He was the tall man in the cloak and black soft hat.

He was a noble-looking old gentleman, perhaps seventy years of age, wonderfully erect, a martial figure. He threw his head back when Pope approached and exclaimed in a calm deep voice:

"Why have you boarded me, sir?"

Pope answered, "We are gentlemen of fortune. We are sailing the high seas in search of an estate and you'll help us in that quest."

He could not but be deferential to the fine old fellow. He was a gentleman by birth, an Irishman, the son of a clergyman, and so fierce and bloody pirate as yet.